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District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Friday, October 29, 2010

Public Affairs  
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## **FORMER PHYSICIAN AND RIVER RUNNER BANNED FROM GRAND CANYON AND OPERATING COMMERCIAL RIVER TRIPS**

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – Morton S. Thomas aka “Doc Thomas”, 70, of Wickenburg, Ariz., was sentenced by U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark E. Aspey to five years probation and is banned during that time from the Grand Canyon National Park and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area for illegally operating a commercial trip on the Colorado River through the parks which began in April 2010. He additionally pleaded guilty to hazardous vessel operation and interference with agency function for providing false information to the National Park Service.

Morton S. Thomas aka “Doc Thomas,” a retired physician, was the trip leader for a noncommercial rafting trip that ran from the end of April into the beginning of May 2010. The trip participants were strangers who were primarily recruited through a river rafting website on the internet. Thomas’ behavior on that trip led to safety and other concerns on the part of trip participants. Thomas, who is also a lawyer, threatened legal ramifications and used other intimidation tactics with trip participants during and after the trip regarding talking with the National Park Service about his actions. As participants left the trip many did report their concerns to law enforcement rangers at the Grand Canyon.

During the resulting investigation evidence revealed that Thomas illegally profited from this noncommercial rafting trip and that he knowingly placed trip participants in hazardous situations during the trip. On June 7, 2010, during the course of the investigation, Thomas sent the Grand Canyon Park Superintendant a false document with a forged signature claiming that it was a valid contract regarding the trip details. Since Thomas’ appearance on these charges, rangers have been contacted by others who had been on past river trips with Thomas who described similar experiences.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Grand Canyon National Park Service. The prosecution was handled by Camille D. Bibles, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Flagstaff.

CASE NUMBER: CR-10-04201MP-001-PCT-MEA  
RELEASE NUMBER: 2010-235 (Thomas)

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